TO FORCE ACTION ON SCHOOL MODERNIZATION EIGHTY-NINE PERCENT OF ILLINOIS SCHOOLS NEED IMPROVEMENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined her Democratic colleagues to force a timely and open debate on school modernization proposals, including "The Public School Modernization Act of 1999." Schakowsky and House members signed a "Discharge Petition," which is a parliamentary tool that allows a majority of members to force a bill that is being bottled-up in committee onto the House floor for debate and consideration.

"Millions of children will soon return to school only to be greeted by overcrowded classrooms, decrepit buildings, and unsafe conditions. In Illinois, a staggering 89% of schools are in need of improvement. Yet, the Republican leadership is standing in the way and is actively engaged in derailing any meaningful school modernization legislation, like the Public School Modernization Act of 1999. That is why I will continue to use all means necessary to advance a powerful and meaningful education agenda that will prepare our students for the 21st Century," Schakowsky said.

□ President Clinton's school construction bill, introduced in the House by Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY), would provide \$24.8 billion in interest-free funding over the next two calendar years for school-construction and school-modernization projects. □ School districts would issue bonds for the money, and the Federal government would pay the interest on the bonds through a Federal tax credit.

There would be no Federal involvement in the selection, design, or implementation of the school-modernization projects. All of those decisions would be made at the State and/or local levels. The only Federal role would be providing tax-subsidized financing under the same procedures currently utilized for tax- exempt bonds. The bill is a cost-effective way of helping local school districts help themselves.

Illinois currently has approximately 60 facilities that are over 100 years old and it would cost one billion dollars to replace them.

"It is unacceptable to send our children to 19th Century schools as we go into the 21st Century.□ Our schools must be well equipped and our children must have the latest technological tools to ensure their success in the future," Schakowsky said.

Attached is a school modernization fact sheet for the state of Illinois.

Total number of schools 0 4,185

Total Enrollment 2,010,000

State Funding for K-12 facilities, 1993-94 \(\Bar{\pi} \) No assistance provided

Total State and Local District School Construction Spending, 1995-96□ \$611,361,000

CURRENT CONDITIONS

89 percent of schools report a need to upgrade or repair building to good overall condition

62 percent of schools report at least one inadequate building feature (e.g. roof, plumbing, electrical, windows, HVAC)

70 percent of schools report at least one unsatisfactory environmental factor (e.g. air quality, ventilation, acoustics heating, lighting)

19 students per computer

In 1997-98, Illinois paid \$932,737,000 in interest on school debt.

PROJECTED NEEDS

Range of amounts needed to upgrade or repair a school to good overall condition: \$500 to \$20,000,000

Enrollment in Illinois over the last decade increased 12 percent. From 1998 to 2008 projected state enrollment in elementary and secondary schools is expected to decrease by 5,000 students (-.2 percent)

Illinois currently has approximately 60 facilities that are over 100 years old. Just to replace

these facilities would cost \$1 billion. (Source: Memorandum from Illinois State Board of Education to Illinois House Republican Staff, December 1998)